

Institution: Newcastle University
Unit of Assessment: 29 English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Promoting the preservation, presentation and public understanding of children's literature with Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Seven Stories was opened in 2005 in Newcastle. It is the first UK museum and archive dedicated to children's books. For an audience of both children and adults it mounts original, nationally-touring exhibitions and runs a programme of events for regional and national audiences. It holds an expanding, internationally important archive relating to British children's literature (manuscripts, original artwork, books, correspondence and associated materials).</p> <p>The Children's Literature Unit (CLU) in the School of English at Newcastle University was established in 2005 to work with Seven Stories. There is collaboration at many levels. In particular, CLU research has underlain the development of the Seven Stories archive; supported Seven Stories' exhibitions; contributed to the training of Seven Stories' staff; and provided international advocacy, raising awareness of this unique resource and helping to establish Seven Stories as one of the world's leading centres for the public understanding of children's literature. In 2012, partly on the basis of research conducted in the CLU, Seven Stories received Arts Council England (ACE) accreditation as the National Centre for Children's Books, becoming the only 'nationally-styled' museum in the North-East.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The partnership between the CLU and Seven Stories has been led by Reynolds whose research had already established her as an international leader in the field of children's literature, with very significant public impact (chair of Booktrust; Children's Laureate steering committee; Museum of Childhood trustee), by the time she was recruited by Newcastle in 2004. Reynolds helped to develop the vision that established Seven Stories and she has remained a Trustee. Her research has always sought to revise and renew standard accounts of children's literature (1, 2). This expertise enables her to contribute directly to Seven Stories' collecting policy. Recent work has been based on material in the Seven Stories archive (3), and has been instrumental in developing the collection and bringing it to wider attention.</p> <p>The second strategic CLU appointment was Grenby (Reader in Children's Literature from 2005). He sat on Seven Stories' Collections sub-committee 2005-09 and now co-chairs the steering committee overseeing the relationship between Seven Stories, Newcastle City Council and the University. One strand of Grenby's research has been a series of essays investigating the development of the historical novel for children (4, 5), an area of particular strength in the Seven Stories archive. He is PI on an AHRC-funded project which uses the archive to research the relationship between children's literature and heritage education (G2).</p> <p>Reynolds won an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award to fund three studentships to work in partnership with Seven Stories from 2005-11 (G1). The overall research programme, led by Reynolds, was designed to exploit the archive to expose hitherto neglected aspects of 20th-century children's publishing, and constituted the first attempt to exploit the research potential of the newly formed collection. Following her graduation, one of the PhDs, Pearson, was appointed in 2011 as the third full member of the CLU. Her research has identified the key figures and contexts that influenced the publishing of children's books in Britain after WW2, and has established the contribution of publishers and editors to the so-called 'second golden age' of children's literature in the 1960s and '70s (6). Much of this research has drawn on the Seven Stories archive, particularly its holdings of editorial correspondence.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>(1) Reynolds K. (2007) <i>Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction</i>. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Winner of the Children's Literature Association Book Award 2009. Available on request.</p> <p>(2) Reynolds, K. (2011) <i>Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available on request.</p>

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- (3) Reynolds, K. (2013) 'Recoupling Text and Image: Graham Greene's *The Little Train*', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 37, 1-19. REF2 output: 184828.
- (4) Grenby M. O. (2008) "'Surely there is no British boy or girl who has not heard of the battle of Waterloo!" War and Children's Literature in the Age of Romanticism'. In: Andrea Immel and Elizabeth Goodenough, eds. *Under Fire: Childhood in the Shadow of War*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp.39-57. REF output: 2012.
- (5) Grenby M. O. (2011) 'History in Fiction: Contextualization as Interpretation in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*', in Vallone, L., Mickenberg, J. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook to Children's Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.275-292. Available on request.
- (6) Pearson, L. (2013) *The Making of Modern Children's Literature: British Children's Publishing in the 1960s and 1970s*. Aldershot: Ashgate. REF2 output: 178443.
- G1. Reynolds, K. (2005) 'The Making of Modern Children's Literature'. AHRC Grant for 3 full Collaborative Doctoral Studentships with Seven Stories.
- G2. Grenby M. O. (2013) 'Children's literature and young people's engagement with heritage and the historic built environment' (£30k). AHRC Grant, ref: AH/K005634/1.

4. Details of the impact

Besides its work with children, a key mission of Seven Stories is to further the understanding of children's books among adults. It achieves this principally through the activities and services associated with the unique materials in its archive. CLU research has significantly contributed to Seven Stories' success in fulfilling this mission in 4 interlinked ways:

1. Through developing the Seven Stories archive, including establishing its value and its potential to support research, and raising awareness of it among scholars worldwide;
2. Through the development of Seven Stories exhibitions;
3. Through shared delivery of an events programme that establishes Seven Stories as a centre for the public understanding of children's literature and significantly extends public discourse on the subject;
4. Through the provision of Continuous Professional Development for Seven Stories staff.

As Kate Edwards, Chief Executive of Seven Stories, notes, each of these interventions has contributed directly to the fulfilment of goals identified by Arts Council England, so that CLU research has been instrumental in 'the success of our application for museum accreditation, with the additional standard of National styling in 2012' (**IMP1**). Seven Stories was able to demonstrate to ACE, for example, that CLU research was important in 'Building the *Excellence and diversity of our learning and events programmes*', 'Increasing the *diversity and skill of arts leadership and workforce*' and 'highlighting the research value of the Seven Stories Collection' which 'encouraged other scholars to make use of the resource.' (**IMP1, IMP2**).

Archive and exhibitions: preserving and presenting children's literary heritage

As Sarah Lawrance, Collection Director at Seven Stories, puts it, 'Reynolds's expert advice in almost all areas of modern and contemporary children's literature has been instrumental in many of the most significant acquisitions to the Collection' (**IMP3**). Reynolds' research across the range of 20th-century children's literature (**1, 2**) has enabled her to advise on all recent acquisitions, and she has chaired the Literature, Programme and Acquisitions Sub-Committee since 2010, authorising all purchases and gifts. During her time as Chair, there have been 140+ accessions, from individual items to entire collections. These have embraced such high-profile acquisitions as the Blyton archive (purchased 2010), including typescripts of nine novels which formed the centrepiece of Seven Stories' 'Many Adventures of Enid Blyton' exhibition (opened May 2013). The research activity at CLU, and Reynolds's work in particular, often has a bearing on donors' decisions to offer work to Seven Stories. In some instances, as Lawrance notes, 'Reynolds's work has led directly to an acquisition', as was the case with the archive of the anarchist children's writer Olive Dehn, which 'was donated to Seven Stories in 2012, following Reynolds's visits to the family in connection with her work' (**IMP3**).

Reynolds' research has also underpinned successful fundraising efforts for major purchases. These have included the Blyton archive, bought at auction with £40k funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, and Edward Ardizzone's watercolours for

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Graham Greene's picturebook *The Little Train*, purchased with £50k raised from the Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, and the Friends of the National Libraries in 2011. The rationale for the acquisition was explained by Reynolds' research on Greene's picturebook and the two contrasting sets of images (the 1946 originals by Greene's lover Dorothy Cragie, the second from 1973 by Ardizzone), work she subsequently published (3). Reynolds also advised on display panels for the 2009-10 exhibition 'All Aboard! And Away We Go', featuring work by Ardizzone.

Similarly, Lawrance affirms, 'Professor Grenby's work on historical fiction for children provided a context for successful funding applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Pilgrim Trust for the purchase of the Leon Garfield archive in 2009' (IMP3) while Pearson's work in the archive during her collaborative studentship (G1) has played an important role in cataloguing, interpretation, and helping to justify further acquisitions. In particular, her doctoral research, published as a monograph (6), on Kaye Webb, editor at Puffin Books, contributed greatly to the development and deployment of a major exhibition, 'There's Nuffin Like a Puffin, 70 Years of Puffin Books'. 71,818 visitors saw the exhibition at Seven Stories (2010-11) and a further 8,701 at Lyme Park in Cheshire (2012-13). As Debbie Beeks, Seven Stories' Learning Manager, confirms, 'Pearson's research into British children's publishing in the 1960s and 70s was particularly valuable in the lead-up.... Her involvement had a positive impact not only on the exhibition itself but also on the training for our learning team and facilitators' (IMP4).

Events: raising awareness, enhancing understanding and extending public discourse

Reynolds' Collaborative Doctoral Award (G1) was specially commended in the AHRC Annual Report for having 'played an important role in raising the profile of Seven Stories as a nationally important resource' (IMP5). Another programme designed in part to raise awareness of Seven Stories' research potential was the HLF-funded 'Telling Histories' programme (2009-10) organised around archival holdings relating to some of Britain's pre-eminent writers of children's historical fiction (Garfield, Rosemary Sutcliff, Geoffrey Trease). Grenby's research on children's historical fiction since the early 19th century was an important foundation of the programme. The flagship event was 'Past Continuous' (2009), a conference organised by Grenby and Reynolds, which explored the place of children's writers as creators of histories and the role of historical fiction in engaging young people with history and heritage. Attracting 50 delegates (the general public, authors, and academics, including many whose interests lay outside the organisation's key collection period), the conference raised both public and scholarly awareness of Seven Stories' collections and enabled Seven Stories to make connections with children's literature communities across the UK and beyond. The use of materials from the Seven Stories archive, publicly demonstrated at the conference, 'was one of the factors which persuaded the daughter of writer Geoffrey Trease to transform the long term loan of his archive into a donation' (as a result of attending the event) (IMP3).

Expanding the public understanding of children's literature is another core aim of the CLU, and the partnership with Seven Stories provides an effective means of achieving it. CLU staff have used their research expertise to develop a custom-designed programme of public talks, seminars and lectures, delivered by themselves and selected external speakers for non-academic audiences in partnership with Seven Stories. Reynolds and Grenby also work together with Seven Stories to programme the Fickling Lecture, each year inviting and briefing a major voice in cultural affairs to speak to an audience of 300+ members of the public on the place of children's literature in contemporary society. In the period 2008-13, lecturers have been Shami Chakrabarti, Roddy Doyle, Nick Hornby, Sarah Brown and Sandi Toksvig. As well as benefiting the public, these have contributed to Seven Stories' delivery of ACE's Accreditation Goals to bring the arts and cultural heritage to wide public audiences.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) at Seven Stories and beyond

CLU and Seven Stories staff also collaborate in organising the 'Looking at Children's Books' events (6 per year since 2008). This series is open to all but is carefully tailored to fit the professional needs of Seven Stories staff. The talks are specifically designed to excavate the Seven Stories archive and to raise awareness of it, both for the general public and the staff. It draws on CLU research expertise in a number of ways: for example CLU staff programme the lecture series, suggest research themes, and help to source materials provided for discussion and display. Since her appointment in 2011, Pearson has substantially expanded the programme's reach and significance and tied it more closely to the archival holdings. Drawing on her unique

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understanding of 20th-century children's publishing and the collections of Seven Stories **(6)**, Pearson has devised a programme of international speakers that utilises the archive to give Seven Stories' staff a fuller understanding of its holdings. These initiatives are highly valued by Seven Stories and have contributed directly to ACE's Goal 4: 'The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled.' This has enabled them to plan more effectively how the organisation can use the collection to engage with an adult audience. Pearson's research-based input to the Seven Stories' public events programme has also resulted in significant audience development, helping Seven Stories to fulfil its role as a nationally significant venue for public discourse on children's books. The attendance has been high for such specialist events, averaging over 30, and including writers, illustrators, collectors and booksellers, as well as teachers and librarians seeking to develop their own professional expertise. As one regular attendee (librarian at Newcastle's Mining Institute) puts it, the sessions 'have been a valued part of my [Personal and Professional Development] plan through Chartership and beyond', enabling 'me to have professional networking with other librarians and archivists in the local area', to gain 'a better understanding of what the academics need in terms of access to collections', and investigate whether 'collaboration with Seven Stories ... was a professional link which could be replicated in my own field' **(IMP6)**.

In addition, in early 2013 (as Debbie Beeks, Learning Manager at Seven Stories, notes) Pearson 'worked closely with me to improve and extend our children's literature training programme for staff', including a 'training module, developed specifically for our staff, and based directly on her publication *The Making of Modern Children's Literature*.' The lectures, delivered between January and March and designed to enhance engagement with the archival holdings, 'helped to improve our "Hooks into Books" schools offer, our internal training programmes and our Continuing Professional Development training for teachers' **(IMP4)**. User feedback commended Pearson's role in preparing staff for work with particular exhibitions ('Enid Blyton lecture was useful and interesting, and did help me work out my thoughts ... especially linking to the exhibition launch') and praised the series in general terms: 'A fantastic opportunity and a delight to attend. I have recommended these to every other facilitator as something not to miss'. 67% of respondents found the lectures 'Very useful' **(IMP7)**. Chief Executive of Seven Stories, Kate Edwards, has written that the series 'provided a perfect introduction to the subject for our staff, increasing organisational knowledge and confidence' **(IMP1)**. This provision of what Seven Stories' ACE accreditation application called 'job-related continual professional development and further education' formed a key part of their achievement of national status **(IMP2)**.

Grenby's research on historical fiction for children and its uses in heritage education **(G2)** has led to Seven Stories' inclusion in a network of academics, digital developers and heritage agencies (including English Heritage, the National Trust) working to develop models of best practice for using story (especially on digital platforms) to engage young people with heritage. The project's workshops (from April 2013) increased awareness of the Seven Stories archive and provided CPD for their staff in using digital media in heritage contexts. As Beeks notes, the programme 'has provided valuable opportunities for networking with other heritage education professionals, and insights into cutting-edge applications of digital technology in museum and heritage settings, which would have been difficult and expensive for us to access by other means' **(IMP4)**.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

IMP1 Testimonial Letter from Chief Executive of Seven Stories, 21 Oct. 2013

IMP2 Seven Stories, 'Application for Arts Council Accreditation, with National Styling' (2012).

IMP3 Testimonial Letter from Collection Director at Seven Stories, 28 Oct. 2013

IMP4 Testimonial Letter from Learning Manager at Seven Stories, 29 Oct. 2013

IMP5 'The Making of Modern Children's Literature', 'AHRC Annual Report and Accounts', 2008-09, pp.28-29.

IMP6 Testimonial Letter from Librarian at the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, Newcastle, 14 October 2013.

IMP7 Children's Literature Lectures Evaluation Questionnaire, conducted by Seven Stories, Jan.-March 2013.

Copies of all these documents are available on request.